

LIVING ORTHODOXY



VOLUME III, NO. 4; JULY-AUGUST 1981

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JULY-AUGUST 1981

LIVING ORTHODOXY (ISSN #0279-8433) is published bimonthly at a base subscription rate of \$6/yr. (see special rates below) by the St. John of Kronstadt Press, Agape Community, Liberty, TN 37095 USA. Second class postage paid at Liberty, TN. POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 to: LIVING ORTHODOXY, Liberty, TN 37095.

PUBLISHED WITH THE BLESSING OF
+GREGORY, BISHOP OF MANHATTAN
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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THE LIFE OF OUR VENERABLE AND GOD-BEARING FATHER THEOPHILUS THE MYRRH-STREAMER

(Whose memory the Holy Church celebrates on July 8th)

Our venerable father Theophilus, whose name means 'friend of God', was born in the Macedonian town of Zykhyas, to pious and virtuous parents, and thus was brought up in a truly Christian manner. When he grew older, they enrolled him in a school for his primary education, and later he dedicated himself to more advanced studies. Owing to his innate intellectual abilities, he completed his formal education in but a short time; but as he progressed in inner love of wisdom, he strove especially to instruct his heart in the laws of strict Christian morality. Avoiding youthful conversations which were more often than not disorderly, his favorite pursuit was to enter into converse with elders and virtuous men. The greater part of his time he devoted to the reading of the Divine Scriptures, in accordance with the command of the most wise Sirach, who says: "Let thy talk be with the wise, and all thy communication in the Law of the Most High" (Ecclus 9:15). The consequence thereof was that the pious youth, excelling in diverse feats of virtue, was, as the holy David says, "like the tree which is planted by the streams of the waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in its season" (Ps 1:3). The reading of the Divine Scriptures and lives of the saints and pious men imperceptibly inclined him to their emulation: thus, Abraham he emulated in hospitality, Joseph the all-comely in chastity, Job in patience and courage, Moses and David in meekness, and the rest of the righteous in manifold struggles. This itself drew attention to him so that finally, as a model of virtuous life, he was elevated to the priesthood. Thenceforth, he went around to various places, edifying Christians by word and the example of his life; and later, for his own spiritual edification, he attached himself to Acacius, Bishop of Randinia, and remained with him. That bishop had been consecrated to the hierarchical rank by Patriarch Niphon II of Constantinople and was his particular friend.

At that time, His Holiness, Patriarch Niphon, received letters from Egypt, in which he was informed of the great and most glorious wonders revealed by God through the holy Joachim, who was then Patriarch of Alexandria, in confounding and putting to shame the deicidal Jewish race and in confirming and exalting our true and Orthodox Faith

and all Christians. (ED. NOTE: References such as this in the Lives of the saints should not be construed as 'anti-Semitism'...for, after all, Jesus Himself, all the Apostles, and nearly all the early Christians were themselves Jews---but Jews who accepted, rather than rejected, the God-Man.) These miracles were as follows.

All throughout Egypt a dreadful plague was raging. A certain Jewish physician, an open enemy of the Christians, spread the rumor abroad among the Turks that the Christians were to blame for the current misfortune; for the Christians, the Jew explained to them, plunge the Cross into the waters, and this, he alleged, was the origin of the deadly contagion then raging. This calumny against the Christians spread everywhere, and ultimately reached the ears of the Egyptian Sultan. Although the Sultan was a Moslem, he loved and honored the holy Patriarch greatly, as much for his virtue as for his wisdom and knowledge, and thus he paid no heed to the denunciation of the Christians made by the enemies of the Cross of Christ. The wretched Jew, seeing that he had not achieved his ends by such slander, devised a new trap in which to ensnare the Christians. The Grand Vizier was of Jewish extraction. This favorite of the Sultan was selected by the Jewish physician as the instrument of his malice against the Christians. The Vizier managed to bring the Sultan to the point where, despite his respect for the Patriarch, he commanded him to appear before the Divan to explain in person the accusation levelled at the Christians. The Patriarch appeared at the inquest. At first, the Sultan conducted a long conversation with him concerning the Faith, and at length, perceiving that with mighty proofs and clear conviction he justified the Christian Faith and refuted Islam, he ordered him to justify the words of the Gospel by moving from its place a mountain located near Cairo. The most holy Patriarch did not waver in the spirit of his faith. Requesting a period of several days for prayer, he and the faithful Christians besought the Lord with fasting, vigil, and prayers, asking that He not put them to shame in the sight of the infidels, lest His holy name be blasphemed by them. At the appointed time, the Patriarch went forth with a great multitude of the people, and in the name of Christ commanded the mountain to move from its place and go to another. The mountain quaked at its foundation and left its place. Fixed in another place by the selfsame name of Christ, it is to this day known in Turkish as Dur-Dago, which signified "the mountain stood". This miracle confounded the impious. Not knowing how to discredit the Christian Faith, its enemies pre-

pared a deadly poison and importuned the Sultan to command the Patriarch to quaff it, for Christ, they quoted, said in the Gospel: "And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (Mk 16: 18). The Sultan agreed to this and commanded that the poison be given to the Patriarch. Full of faith in the power of the Cross of Christ, the Patriarch made the sign of the Cross over the deadly cup and drank the potion. In vain did they await his imminent death, for the Patriarch remained completely unharmed. Thereafter, filling a glass with water, he asked that the Jew drink it; it was impossible to refused, for the Sultan himself commanded it. Thus, the wretch drank the water and fell down dead at that very moment. Astonished by the miracles wrought by the Patriarch, the Sultan ordered the Vizier beheaded and imposed a fine upon the rest of the Jews, so that, at their expense, water mains were constructed to connect the inner city of Cairo with the Nile River; but eh holy Patriarch he exalted with honors.

When Patriarch Niphon learned of these wondrous events in letters sent to him in Constantinople, he straightway dispatched to Alexandria the aforementioned Bishop Acacius of Randinia, the venerable Theophilus, and others, that they might learn in detail and verify with their own eyes what had transpired. At the same time, the holy Niphon wrote to Patriarch Joachim of Alexandria, thanking the Lord for hearkening unto his prayer and for having wrought such wonders through him, to the glory and magnification of the Christian race; furthermore, he asked that he receive favorably the men he had sent. Thus, they travelled without delay to Alexandria and were received with great joy and favor by His Holiness, the Patriarch, who maintained them at his own residence for quite some time. By his virtue and education, the venerable Theophilus attracted particular attention to himself. With Bishop Acacius and the others, he departed from Alexandria for Mount Sinai, and thence journeyed through the desert to the holy city of Jerisulam. There he worshipped at the life-bearing Sepulchre of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the other holy sites, and visited Mount Tabor and Damascus. There, he met the Patriarch of Antioch, by whom he was entrusted with letters to the Patriarch of Constantinople. From Damascus he returned to Jerusalem, where Bishop Acacius fell ill and reposed. After the death of Acacius, departing with the blessing of the Patriarch of Jerusalem and with letters to deliver to the Patriarch of Constantinople, he returned to Constantinople and presented himself to the new Patriarch,

His Holiness, Pachomius, who had been metropolitan of Sykhnia; for the holy Patriarch Niphon, who had dispatched them on their errand, had relinquished his see while they were away. Patriarch Pachomius received them with honors and blessed the labors they had undertaken while they were on their journey. Perceiving in Theophilus a man virtuous and learned, he kept him by his side and entrusted the secretarial work of the Patriarchate to him, bestowing upon him the title of Notary and Exarch of the Great Church. Theophilus undertook these responsibilities for quite a long time and was respected by all for his virtues. But seeing and sensing that, in the enjoyment of external life and in the respect shown him there was little or no real food for the spirit, he set aside his duties and repaired to the Holy Mountain, to the Monastery of Vatopedi.

So as not to fall into error and delusion in the reasoning of his own heart without the guidance of an elder in the monastic life, he entrusted himself to a bishop then living in retirement at Vatopedi and submitted himself unreservedly to his will, fulfilling all manner of obediences and daily offering up the bloodless Sacrifice unto the Lord God. But when his bishop-elder departed unto the Lord, the venerable Theophilus removed to the monastery of Iveron, hoping to find there models to emulate. There, he learned from one perfect obedience; from another, humility; from yet another, love for God and neighbor, meekness and longsuffering. Consequently, Theophilus became a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit and a model of monastic virtues. Meanwhile, since he was a skilled scribe, he was given an obedience by the monastery to copy in his cell books which were disintegrating from age. Of these books, many are preserved to this day in the monastery of Iveron. And since, as the Lord says, "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt 5:14), the venerable Theophilus became renowned not only on the Holy Mountain, but throughout the surrounding region; and Thessalonica, which was then bereft of an archpastor, strove mightily to persuade the holy Theophilus to accept the hierarchical dignity. But the humble-minded Theophilus would not hear of such a thing. It chanced at that time, however, that Patriarch Theoleptus of Constantinople was in Thessalonica, and the inhabitants of that city appealed to him to bestow the Athonite hermit Theophilus upon them as their archpastor. For his part, His Holiness the Patriarch was aympathetic to their request and wrote personally to Theophilus (for in times past he had been very friendly with Theophilus, as they were compatriots), asking him to come to Thessalonica to renew their

acquaintance, but mentioning nothing of the petitions of the Thessalonians.

The venerable one understood why the holy Patriarch was inviting him to Thessalonica, and so as to refuse so lofty a dignity and thus avoid transitory glory and honor, he straightway received the great schema, and replied to the holy Patriarch that a grievous illness had impelled him to take the great schema and refuse the hierarchical ministry, and that by reason of his illness he could in no wise journey to Thessalonica as requested. Thus excusing himself from the obligation of meeting with the holy Patriarch then, he asked his forgiveness and prayers, and added that by the grace of the Lord he would see him again in the Kingdom of Heaven. This answer, on the one hand, grieved the holy Patriarch, but on the other hand it gladdened his heart to see that Theophilus so excelled in true humility and monastic struggles.

At that time, not far from the Monastery of Iveron, an abbot by the name of Dionysius struggled in solitude. Enamored of hesychasm, the venerable Theophilus also, with the permission of the abbot and the brethren, constructed a small hut near the abbot Dionysius and shared with him the struggles of profound eremitism, being edified by the example of his exalted life and his wise discourses. Their mutual love was so close that, it seemed, a single spirit dwelt within them. At that time a certain Cyril, who lived in Karyes, was renowned for his ascetic life. So as to receive spiritual profit from him also and to emulate his life, the holy Theophilus forsook his solitude and repaired to Karyes, to live near Cyril. While the venerable one was living with Cyril, the Elder Seraphim, Protos of the Holy Mountain and Cyril's former spiritual father, often came to them to serve. The Protos's attention was attracted by Theophilus; he came to love him for his holy life, and thenceforth Theophilus and the Protos remained the closest of friends.

But the divine Theophilus did not long remain in Karyes. His overwhelming desire for solitude led him to the environs of the Monastery of Pantocrator, to the Kellia of St. Basil, which met all the conditions for profound solitude and and unimpaired tranquillity of hesychasm. The kellia required repairs, and the holy Theophilus, possessing not so much as a mite, could neither pay the monastery the rent due for it nor renovate it, so great was the degree of his monastic poverty. The Protos, the Elder Seraphim, assisted him in his extrem-

ity. Thus, the holy Theophilus immersed himself in hesychasm in the wilderness, having a certain brother Isaac as his fellow ascetic. St. Theophilus's withdrawal from all things had a profound effect upon the Protos. Having constructed a gallery around the Protaton, erected a bell-tower and renovated the interior of that church, he approached the elders of the Holy Mountain for permission to relinquish the office of Protos and depart for a retreat in the wilderness where, with the holy Theophilus, he occupied himself continually with the reading of the sacred Scriptures and the holy Fathers, drawing forth thence essential and imperishable nourishment for his immortal soul.

The exclusive pursuit of the venerable Theophilus was what the holy Fathers call mental activity, or the preserving of the mind by the unceasing and heartfelt repetition of the Jesus Prayer: i.e., O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me. In the words of the holy Callistus, there are two types of spiritual activity: the first---for the curbing of the passions---lies in fasting, vigil, prostrations, and other outward struggles; and the second---for the cleansing of the mind and heart from impure thoughts---is perfected with strict attention, with unceasing prayer of the heart to the Lord Jesus, made in secret with a sense of pain and the soul's cry of suffering, as the divine Fathers teach. With this mental activity and sacred prayer, with weeping and tears born of that prayer, he cleansed his heart of the passions and unclean thoughts, and having utterly set the demons at nought, made himself a chosen habitation of the Holy Spirit. And since, in the words of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, divine love does not see or know ought other than its own content, the venerable Theophilus, aflame with love for God, thought of nothing but Jesus: Jesus was his breath, his life; Jesus was ever in his heart. Like the holy Apostle Paul, Theophilus lived no more, but Christ lived within him (cf. Gal 2:20), and for this cause, like St. Paul, he was accounted worthy of the divine gifts of the Holy Spirit, foresaw the future, knew the secrets of the hearts and thoughts of men, and came "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

Finally, full of years, the holy one foreknew the time of his own death and began to prepare himself for his departure into eternity. He then wrote a confession of the Faith and a spiritual testament, and before death expressed the desire that the Mystery of Holy Unction be performed over him. This took place on a Friday. Having taken

leave of all, he received the communion of the all-pure Mysteries of Christ in church on Saturday, summoned his disciple Isaac to reveal to him his last wishes, and expressed himself thankful to God for all things. Humble throughout his whole life, the holy Theophilus did not desire the honors of men even after his repose, and he commanded Isaac to reveal to no one the time of his repose, i.e., when he would surrender his spirit into the hands of his God, so that the priests would not gather to perform the usual burial service over him; and he further ordered Isaac to bind his feet with a cord and cast his body as far away as possible. Having in this manner disclosed his last will to his disciple, the venerable Theophilus stretched himself out on his bed. "O Lord Jesus Christ, receive Thou my spirit!" he said, and slept the sleep of a venerable death, on Sunday, July 8th, in the year 1548 of Christ's Incarnation, before the dawn.

His obedient disciple Isaac carried out the saint's commands with precision. Binding his feet with a cord, he dragged the body into the forest. News of the holy one's repose, however, spread all throughout the Holy Mountain, for the number of monks who were particularly friendly with the holy one was great, and all desired to see and bow down before his grave and there receive the blessing of the departed one. So as not to deprive the saint's friends thereof, his disciple showed them a place where he had broken up the ground and alleged it to be the grave of the venerable one. But the monks of the Monasteries of Iveron and of Pantocrator doubted that it was the site of the holy one's burial, prompted by some unerring inner sense; and they later searched the forest, found there the relics of the holy Theophilus, and took them up and kept them themselves, hiding the fact from others.

Forty days afterwards, Isaac went to the glade where he had hidden the body of his elder and, to his amazement, could not find it. Long did he search before he finally realized that the relics were at the Monastery of Pantocrator. Appearing there, he asked the elders to give him back the remains of his father, for they belonged to him; but the monks of Pantocrator would not hear of it. Thus a considerable time passed. But to Isaac's relief, Macarius, Bishop of Hierissos, was visiting the Holy Mountain, and the distraught disciple approached him with a complaint against the Monastery of Pantocrator and asked him to take his part in the matter. Macarius did not delay. Gathering together the abbots of Athos, he betook himself to Pantocrator, separated one of St. Theophilus' hands from the relics to be enshrined

in that monastery, and returned the remainder to the holy one's disciple. Then they bore them in solemn procession from Pantocrator to the Kellia of St. Basil, where the venerable one had lived in solitude, and thenceforth they began to exude a fragrant myrrh as a testimony to the sanctity of his life.

Such was the life of our venerable father Theophilus the myrrh-gusher. Thus did he struggle and thus has he been glorified by God on earth and in Heaven, during his lifetime and after his repose. May we also emulate the venerable one in poverty, meekness, humility, purity, solitude and love for God and neighbor, that with him we too may inherit the Kingdom of Heaven in Christ Jesus our Lord. To Him be glory and dominion, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever. Amen.

[Translated from the Athonite Patericon, Vol. II, pp. 67-76, by the staff of Orthodox Life.]



LETTERS FROM OUR FRIENDS

Dear Fr. Gregory:

I read with interest St. Ephraim the Syrian's homily on the last days in the recent issue of LIVING ORTHODOXY. A few years ago, an Orthodox friend of mine showed me a copy of a treatise on the very same subject by a certain Bishop Hippolytus who, as I recall, was a Greek living several hundred years ago. This latter work might well be worth publishing in your magazine if you can find it. Unfortunately, I wouldn't know where to look, although I would very much like to see a copy of it again. This subject probably deserves more attention

than it is getting presently. (....) If you ever visit these parts again, please come stay with us. (...) And keep publishing!

Your servant in Christ,
John Hudamish
Woodburn, OR

[If anyone can supply us with a copy of the treatise in question, we would be delighted to see it and to consider it for publication.]

Sir:

Many lives of the saints are now available in English. Why not collect these together, and print them on 8½x11 sheets, punched for 3-ring binders? It is not possible for most people to be in possession of more than a fraction of the available lives. By doing it in this way, new lives could easily be added to the volume, and better translations substituted for the others. Where, for example, can one obtain a life of St. Peter the Athonite? I know, for I have a copy of LIVING ORTHODOXY III 3 before me. If I didn't, I would be out of luck. I am certain that many people would buy printings of such lives, which could be sold individually.

In Christ,
Fr. Mark Stevens
Royalton, IL

[While it is probably economically impossible at this point to plan printings of complete lives as you suggest, we are now seeking a blessing for a series of shorter Lives to be issued as you suggest. If the blessing is forthcoming, and sufficient subscription support available, the Press will begin to release in December a series of short Lives (each limited to two sides of an 8½x11 sheet), each of which will be accompanied by an iconographic drawing of the Saint. These will be available both on punched mylar-edged paper (for durability in ring-binders) and on ordinary paper (much less costly) for Church-school use. If sufficient demand arises, the drawings alone may also be issued (on 8½x11) paper for Church-school use for coloring. Each of the Lives will also include bibliographic references to more ample Lives to be found elsewhere. As for the longer Lives...our offer still stands to provide such as we are available as xeroxes on a cost-basis. Later, if it is apparent that there is sufficient support for such an undertaking, we may attempt to release complete Lives in the same format as these shorter ones.]

WHERE IS THE CHURCH?

[A response to an inquiry from a Roman Catholic priest concerning our reasons for leaving an 'American Orthodox' jurisdiction to become part of an 'ethnic' Church last year.]

Peace, dear Father, in the Lord Jesus the Christ!

You inquire concerning our change in 'Church affiliation'---which, as I hope will become evident, was far more than that. The only issue for us from the very beginning has been to truly live the Faith in unity with our Lord Jesus, the Holy Apostles, and the Fathers throughout the ages. When we first became 'Orthodox', a decade ago, our understanding of the Faith was very limited and very different from what it is now. Our understanding of the true nature of the Church was even more limited.

There is grave danger that I may be unable to say what I must say (if I am to say anything) in response to your question without seriously offending you, and I pray that I may not do so...and that you may forgive me if I do so. For to answer the question at all requires that I speak clearly concerning the Church, her history, and her present situation---something which is certain not to be pleasing to a Roman Catholic mind.

Ten years ago (and much more recently), I continued under the illusion that the Church was a somewhat nebulous body, with many manifestations in the world, some more and some less adequate to her true nature. I accepted (without the name) what has come to be called the 'branch' theory: that there was One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, not to be identified completely with any single institution on earth; and that of that Church the Orthodox, Roman, and Anglican communions were parts, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. This opinion is possible only so long as one ignores the teachings of each of these bodies (which of course often issue in actions as well). It is possible so long as one either holds that theological Truth is relative (e.g., that all theological statements are only fragmentary and inadequate reflections of divine Truth, and that none of them is to be accorded any permanent validity), or that it is simply irrelevant (an opinion in such statements common amongst some Protestants as 'It doesn't matter what you believe so long as you're saved and your heart is right with God'). It seems unlikely that any committed Roman Catholic could assent to either proposition.

As I continued to grow in the Faith, it became increasingly evident (or rather, I became increasingly conscious) that there were many and critical theological conflicts between these 'branches' of the Church (as I then supposed). In other words, in pure logic it was apparent that if A was true B had to be false...or alternatively, that both had to be false. These problems are not limited to 'minor' questions (are there any minor theological problems?), but rather strike to the very heart of the Faith. It also became apparent that I had to do something about it---that I could not continue to float around in a nebulous no-man's-land, fence-sitting in a 'jurisdiction' which was actually (despite occasional loud protestations to the contrary) no more 'orthodox' than it was 'roman' or 'anglican'. At each Liturgy I was commemorating a bishop who was himself effectively in communion with just about anyone who would assent to it, and whom he personally liked. With much regret (and many hesitations), I began to take a hard new look at the nature of the Church and at the many bodies which claimed either to be Her or part of Her.

Before going ahead, I think I must insert an interesting historical comment which is mostly irrelevant to the rest of this. During this 'ecumenical' period in my own religious history (though I would have resisted the term), I found to my considerable interest that while I (as a would-be Orthodox priest) was in general quite uncomfortable with the Roman Church at large, I was quite at home in establishments of the Benedictine/Cistercian tradition. I remarked on it at the time and still assume that this curiosity is explained by the semi-autonomy (from the 'secular church') of Roman monastic institutions, which has enabled this tradition to retain some of its true Orthodox character (dating as it does from well before the schism and departure into heresy of Rome) and roots.

So much for that...sadly, it has little meaning except as a historical curiosity---and, of far greater importance, a reminder to those who seek the true Faith that there truly once was a genuine western Orthodoxy. In any event, I did begin to seek anew the Church---realizing that I could not 'do it myself', in some sort of mystical union with a nebulous mystical Church which had no real relationship to anything concrete here on earth. Such a notion is simply alien to the Gospels and the Fathers.

So where to go? Where was the true Church to be found...if at all?

History and theology clearly defined what the Church was, what She believed, how She was to live. But was anyone actually doing it? I had for some years casually assumed that, should the time come that I was forced to leave Met. Trevor's jurisdiction, I would quite naturally go to the 'OCA', as it did seem (by popular rumor) to be the 'orthodox' jurisdiction most interested in a ministry to Americans, and least committed to ethnic roots. I also assumed (again as a result of popular rumor) that the 'Synod' (the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia) was the least interested in such a ministry, and the most devoted to a continuing existence as a body of exiles just waiting for the chance to return to the mother-country (no doubt with swords and sabres rattling). As I began to look more closely, I was quite astonished by what I in fact found.

It would be unseemly to engage in any extensive commentary on what I came to see concerning these and other 'orthodox jurisdictions'. Suffice it to say that I was quite shocked to discover that many of these jurisdictions were busily at work trying to make themselves acceptable to (and ultimately most likely indistinguishable from) the western theological/academic tradition---which is the antithesis of true Orthodoxy. I discovered, on the other hand, that the Synod was quite committed to continuing in the age-old Orthodox tradition of bringing the Faith to whatever land the Church might arrive in...that it (perhaps alone) stood clearly in the tradition of SS. Cyril and Methodius, and of the transhuman labors of the blessed Innocent on behalf of the native Americans whom he was sent to Alaska to serve, along with the Russian colonists there. I found scattered throughout the country mission parishes, alive and active, with services in English. I found a Church administration obviously committed to the support and extension of this activity. But just as important, I found a determination that it was to be the Faith which was lived and proclaimed in these missions and parishes...not some watered-down substitute for it. Further, I have yet to meet anyone with a sword at his side, or anyone who 'worships the Czar-martyr', or anyone who is convinced that God speaks only to Russians in Russian (indeed, I just recently learned that almost 20% of our parishes are not Russian).

While I (and the Synod officially) decline to 'pass judgement' to the effect that some or all of the putatively 'orthodox' churches have fallen completely away from the Faith and into heresy, it is nevertheless self-evident in their actions that they are far from the Church

of St. Mark of Ephesus (of whom, during the negotiations at the anti-council of Florence, the bishop of Rome said that if he had not signed ---which he had not---the signatures of all the other 'orthodox' delegates were worthless), St. Photios the Great, and countless others who defended the true Faith at grave risk to their personal liberty and even lives against other 'Christians'. It would be pointless to go into detail here, discussing the specific issues and actions.

The conclusion of all these observations was simply that there truly was One Church, and that She was indeed present, alive and well on earth, the living Body of Christ, and that She had specific and definable limits (well-defined by the Fathers and Councils as to nature, even if it is not always simple to determine whether a specific person or group of persons are within those limits). The only body which I found which I was spiritually and morally certain was within those limits was the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia---ethnic or not, small or large, pleasant or not. In point of fact, I have found my brethren to be pleasant, loving, committed to the Faith first and (in the case of those with ethnic ties) culture second: a strong, vital, and dedicated Apostolic Church.

It is with sadness that I must turn to others whom I count amongst my friends and brethren and speak the Truth (for all too often the genuine spiritual gulf between us then turns into a seemingly irreparable human gulf as well) concerning these matters. But to do any less would be to fall short of my own calling and---more critically---to do you and them a grave disservice. 'If there be no preacher, how shall they hear?'

So, Father....I hope that I have somewhat answered your question, and that I have been able to do so in a spirit of love such that you may be led and encouraged in the Faith, rather than driven from it. I beg your forgiveness for any offense, and pray that the Lord may enable you to look beyond my own inadequacy to the Truth which I intend to convey. May His blessing be upon you and all the brethren.

In His Love and Service,
Unworthy priest Gregory

WHO AND WHERE ARE WE?

A recent informal survey of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia reveals some interesting information concerning it---its size, distribution, and 'ethnic' make-up. We are not large, as the world counts numbers (but then it seems that the Scriptures say something about a 'remnant'), but neither are we insignificant. We are most certainly not a collection of a few 'dying parishes' but rather very much alive and active. Neither are we an 'ethnic club' bolstered by a few crazy slavophiles---nearly 20% of our parishes and missions are non-Russian in predominant makeup and/or liturgical language.

The Church counts in its midst 15 dioceses and one ecclesiastical mission (in Jerusalem), 349 church communities, 27 monastic communities, 23 institutions of various sorts, and 12 regular publications (as well as numerous parish bulletins). Her 322 clerics include 18 bishops, 203 priests, 51 deacons, 11 subdeacons, 39 tonsured readers...a number constantly on the increase.

The best estimate is that there are about 20,000 active Orthodox Christians in our parishes and missions in this country (this does NOT include those who are only nominally 'Orthodox' by reason of heritage or rare attendance at services), and an additional 37,000 in other parts of the world.

Of the institutions mentioned above, there are 5 known cemeteries, 8 nursing homes, 1 orphanage, 6 schools, 2 seminars (buildingless academies), and 2 permanent youth camps.

Perhaps of the greatest significance for our understanding is the 'ethnic' census'. Of our parishes and missions, some 60 are identifiably non-Russian in predominant makeup and liturgical language: 2 Bulgarian/Macedonian, 3 Dutch, 25 English, 5 French, 10 German, 10 Greek, 1 Italian, 2 Romanian, and 2 Serbian. In addition, there are in the Middle East several entirely Arabic parishes which have long used and by choice continue to use Church Slavonic as their liturgical language.

May God grant the increase!

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE: An Orthodox Christian Perspective

Christian life is centered in that Act in which God became man; 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us' (Jn 1:14). This union of God and man in one person, the Incarnation of Our Lord, has once and for all bridged the gap between God and Creation which came about through the Fall. By the Incarnation, the material world is re-deemed.

It is brought back to the possibility of harmony with its Creator. Our redemption, however, is no one-time event, over and done with at the moment of the Passion or Ascension. God did not become Man simply to provide for the inspiration of future generations; His saving acts have brought about in the world in which we live a permanent alteration. Prior to the incarnation, man could only know God as if at a distance, even as a shadow. But now God Himself lives among us. Jesus promised: 'And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world' (Matt 28:20).

Confession: The Mystery of Purification



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The Fathers most frequently called these particular forms of the Lord's enduring, reliable Presence 'Mysteries', although other terms have also been used by the Church. The most familiar (and grammatically most flexible) term in English is 'Sacrament'. For our purposes here, the two terms will be used interchangeably---for 'mystery' conveys a truth about God's Grace which is entirely lacking in 'sacrament'.

The Holy Mysteries are no mere signs or symbols; they are not simply external indications of the presence of some invisible reality. Mere signs can lie; Sacraments cannot. A Sacrament is the Divine Presence, just as the Man Jesus who walked among men 2,000 years ago was God Himself incarnate. When some portion of this created world (a cup of wine, a piece of bread, a vial of oil, a touch upon the head, etc.) becomes Mystery, it becomes thereby 'of God'. It is divinized; it becomes the real and present location of that conti-

Yes....it finally happened! By the Grace of God, the second edition of THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE came together, with an entirely new set of illustrations and major revisions after the thorough review of several of the brethren of Holy Trinity Monastery and of Vladyka Gregory. Herewith some reduced pages (the booklet is 4"x6½") that our readers may have a better idea of what it looks like. Individual copies will be mailed first-class for \$2.00 + 75¢ postage. 2-10 copies may be ordered @ \$2.00 each + \$1.00 postage (bookpost). Larger quantities are subject to discounts...write for detailed information.

AGAPE COMMUNITY NOTES

AT THE TEMPLE

A striking change has been wrought at the Temple of the Annunciation. The triangular space above the High Place at the back of the Altar is no longer a barren expanse of panel-board, but rather has been all but covered by a magnificent icon of Our Lady of the Sign, accomplished during a recent two-week post-Conference visit by our dedicated and prolific iconographer-not-usually-in-residence. It was a joy to have Luke as our guest during the time of his labors, but an even greater joy to celebrate the installation of the icon at the services for the Feast of the Procession of the Holy Cross. The space is to be completed by two attending cherubim on separate circular panels. Happily, an appropriate icon-lamp was available, a recent gift from the Pillars of Orthodoxy Church in Mt. Holly Springs, PA. Glory be to God!

ATLANTA MISSION

Regular readers' services continue in Atlanta, and the Confessions are heard and the Vigil and Divine Liturgy served there on the first Sunday of the month, with the temporary blessing of Vladyka Gregory. After Fr. Gregory's most recent visit, a petition was made by the faithful there, seeking the blessing of Metropolitan Philaret for the regular establishment of a mission in Atlanta. All services in Atlanta are, for the present time, being held at the home of Stephen Ritter in Chamblee (a northeast suburb). Inquiries may be directed to Stephen (404/457-0581) or to Fr. Gregory (615/536-5239). Just as the petition for the establishment of the mission was being made, a gift of a velvet-bound English Gospel was received for use there from one of the monks at Holy Trinity Monastery... may it presage a living and vital proclamation of the Word in that God-saved city!

WELCOME VISITORS

Visitors are always welcome at Agape, and it is our prayer that, despite our inadequacies, they may always be received as Christ. Since our return from the Conference, our life here has been graced not only by the extended stay of Luke Gehring as he labored on the icon for the Temple, but also by an altogether-too-brief visit by Fr. Ioannikios of Holy Trinity Monastery...a visit which served to excite in us a hope that it would not be too long a time before it was followed by a

more leisurely stay. It is impossible to overstate the need for those who struggle to live and proclaim the Faith in outlying and remote locations for frequent visits from brethren who have the good fortune to live in the 'centers' of the Faith. To some extent, this need may be met as we travel amongst our brethren elsewhere, but no amount of such travel can replace the spiritual value of visits here by our brethren and elders in the Faith.

1981 ORTHODOX CONFERENCE

It was our joy and privilege, thanks in large measure to the generosity and assistance of several of our brethren who would probably prefer anonymity, to be able to attend the Orthodox Conference at Mt Holly Springs during the latter part of July. It was a great pleasure to be able to spend the week with so many of our brethren in the Faith in prayer, study, and just plain visiting. The character of the week was dominated, as is entirely appropriate for Christians, by the daily Divine Liturgies and evening services, around which the lectures and common meals (and such meals!) were organized. Those who undertook the planning and organization of the Conference are to be heartily commended for an excellent job, which made possible such a complex of activities with hardly a moment of wasted time. It was a special joy and privilege that the entire Conference took place with the presence and blessing of Vladyka Gregory, whose contribution to it was hardly limited to the excellent address he gave concerning the end-times. For the benefit of participants and those who were unable to attend, it is expected that St. Nectarios' Press in Seattle will have available before the end of the year a transcript of the proceedings of the Conference.

GLORIFICATION OF THE NEW-MARTYRS

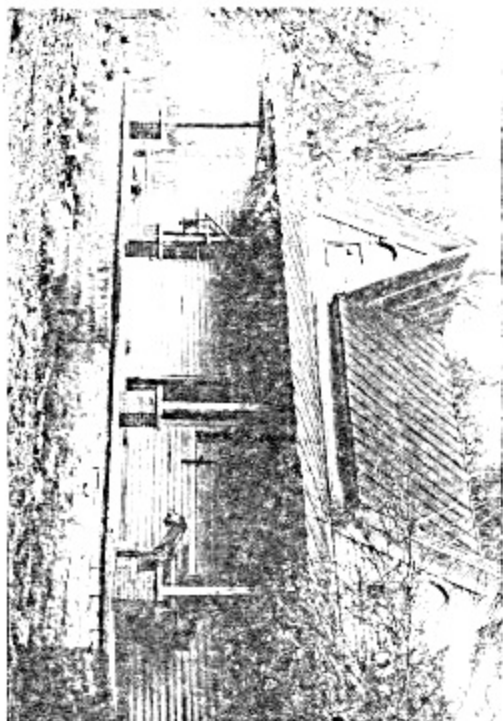
By Decree of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, the glorification of all the New-Martyrs of the Bolshevik yoke will take place at the Synodal Cathedral in New York City at the Vigil and Divine Liturgy for Sunday 19 Oct./1 Nov. It is with great joy that we greet this solemnity, whereby the Church formally recognizes the place before the Throne of God of those who have borne witness without regard to cost to the true Faith. God willing, all possible effort will be expended that as many as possible from the Community may share in the festivities, and we encourage all the faithful to be present if at all possible.

A PLACE TO LIVE?

The house shown here, together with up to about 60 acres of land, is available for purchase and is located a mile from the Temple of the Annunciation. It is situated about 100 yds. from the Baptistry-spring (see photo opposite), near the county road (with mail and schoolbus service), and has electric and telephone lines in place. The house, built about 1880, contains two large downstairs rooms in front (one with stone fireplace) and a spacious kitchen behind. Two sizeable bedrooms upstairs make it of suitable size for a moderate-sized family. Running water is available from the spring, and there is an outhouse a reasonable distance from the house.

A generous garden-spot lies in front of the house, and a small bottom (about $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres) is adequate for pasture, hay-crop or small-scale field-crops. The hollow behind the house is rugged terrain, with about 10,000 pine trees planted over a portion. Two fields could be re-cleared from the balance for hay, small grains, or pasture.

We would much prefer to see this property in the hands of Orthodox settlers, and so offer it here before opening it to the general market. The price for the whole property is \$45 thousand; divisions can be made



WORTHY TO BE READ

BLESSED ATHANASIA (St. Xenia Press, Wildwood Rural Branch, Redding, CA 96001, \$1.50, 1980) (also available from the Bookservice). This modest account of the life and labors of a 'God-pleaser' almost of our own days, one of the spiritual offspring of St. Seraphim, makes a delightful addition to the spiritual library of any Orthodox home, and richly deserves a place therein. As well as providing solid food for the mature Orthodox Christian, it is of such a scope and nature as to be entirely suitable for reading to or by younger Orthodox as well. Several well-chosen photographs and etchings serve to kindle a deeper interest in the surroundings in which the Blessed Athanasia labored. This little book is identified as 'Volume One' of a series entitled 'The God-Pleasers', and it is to be hoped that further volumes will not be long in making their appearance.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, Volume 6 (Synaxis Press, Chilliwack, B.C., Canada V2P-6J7, \$2.50, 1981) (will be available from the Bookservice when Canadian mail situation allows; in the meanwhile perhaps best ordered from St. Nectarios Press, 10300 Ashworth Ave. N, Seattle, WA 98133; add 75¢ for postage) We warmly welcome this volume, as we have its predecessors, as an invaluable contribution to the task of providing an Orthodox education and environment for our children (and adults as well!). Unlike so many 'lives' for children, these are not watered-down, expurgated versions, as lifeless as the average children's books. They provide enough of the substance of the labors of the Saints to give a solid sense of their struggles, but without bogging down in excessive detail. Illustrations, which our children find of almost as great interest as the stories themselves, accompany most of the Lives.

SYNAXIS, Volume 5 (Synaxis Press; see above; \$3.50 + postage from St. Nectarios Press) Although time has not yet permitted a thorough reading, this latest volume of SYNAXIS appears to be a worthy successor to its predecessors. Of particular interest is a translation of yet another of Met. Antony's excellent essays on the practical implications of the fundamental dogmas of the Faith, 'The Moral Idea of the Dogma of the Holy Spirit'. Several previously-untranslated hymns of St. Ephraim the Syrian provide a complement of special interest.

LETTERS FROM A CONVERT: II

Missionary Letters from an Eastern Orthodox Convert
To Her Protestant Parents
[the second in a series]

Dear Parents,

I received your letter and I think I understand the reason for your confusion and indecision. You now understand the basis for believing that the Councils, the Church, its bishops, and Holy Tradition as well as the Bible are authorities to be obeyed, and you say you can find no fault with the logic presented in the previous letter. But you still have unresolved questions which were raised by former teachers as to the validity of praying to the Saints, venerating icons, etc. Therefore, I am going to attempt to answer your questions in the remainder of this letter.

SAINTS

Now I know that you respect the President of the United States. If he walked into the room, you would stand in deference to him, and you might even be tongue-tied at being so close to such an important person. Yet you question that we honor the saints? They have run a race much more important than an election race, and they have fought a much better and harder fight: they have conquered both themselves and Satan by God's Grace. Should we not honor them as much as, if not more than, a temporal ruler? We cheer Olympic victors and think much of their effort and skill. Is not a holy life infinitely more worthy of honor and respect?

But do not think that we forget God when we look at these men and women. They are lights to the world and to the Church, being reflections of God Who is Light. There are times when I have been greatly inspired to praise God because I saw (or perhaps rather only caught a glimpse of) God's Grace as it is shown through the life of the Virgin Mother of God or some other Saint, marvelling at His mercies and help to that person in his life, encouraged that He will do the same for me if I will only let Him. No, these Saints became what they are because of God's mercies, so praise of them is praise of God, their Maker and Helper. Also, if the Saints are part of the Body of Christ, should we not see Christ more fully by looking at them, the Body, as well as the Head of the Body which is Jesus the Christ?

Now do not be mistaken: all Christians are saints, which is merely a word meaning 'holy one'. But by capitalizing the word 'saint', the Church refers to those whose lives on earth were so exemplary and outstanding that She indicates them as guides to follow on the Christian walk. Also, the Church witnesses that those She names as Saints are with God, the righteous praising Him in Heaven. For the teaching of the Church has always been that normally the state of a person at death is uncertain, for only God Who knows the heart can judge righteously. But the Saints have been attested to be true sons of God by miracles done after their death at their graves and through prayers addressed to them. Thus, the Church and creation both witness that these are true sons of God, dwelling with Him in Heaven.

BEING SAVED

Since I raised the subject in the previous paragraph, I'll briefly deal with the Protestant doctrines of salvation. According to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, salvation is a process which is started at the time of one's entry into the Church, and can only be said to be completed after death. The Church never held the belief that someone could have some mystical experience which would thenceforth guarantee his entry into Heaven. For Jesus said, 'He that endures to the end shall be saved' (Matt 24:13). Salvation is a process of life-reforming that a Christian partakes in because he loves God. The entry of the Holy Spirit into a Christian's very being at Baptism and Chrismation starts this process, but he must continue it or he is like the plants which, though planted by the Hand of God, were withered by sun or choked out by the weeds (Lk 8:5-15).

Now, salvation is in no way a reward for a Christian's mighty deeds of righteousness, for these are as filthy rags. Rather, the Christian seeks for God and loves Him, and because of his love he seeks to become like God. God in His unfathomable love and mercy sees the Christian's willingness and gives him strength to do His will---and then despite his failures, God grants salvation---that is, to dwell with Him in Heaven forever.

Neither am I predestined (without choice) to Heaven or others to hell. This also is an invention of the Protestant Reformation. The fact that God can see the end from the beginning does not negate our free will; it merely testifies that God is truly omniscient, knowing in

the past what we will decide in the future. A common example of this is when you know someone so well that you know what he will say or do in a particular instance. He has free choice, but you know him well enough to know which way he will freely choose to act. God, being all-knowing, could figure it all out from the beginning. He chose to act as He did, knowing what our free choices would be, and in this way 'predestining' us to live our lives as we do. But is our free choice, not His decree or decision, by which we act as we do. We are therefore without excuse for our decisions.

God gives us the choice of how to live our lives. Our decision then reveals our rejection or acceptance of Him and His ways and His Grace. Thus, salvation is something I decide with my entire life: it is not something I decide during a half-hour in my life one Sunday morning, neither is it something decided on the basis of one Sunday morning a week--rather, it is something for which I must spend my entire life. If I desire the Pearl of Great Price, I must sell all I have (and my most precious and only real possession is my time) in order to buy it. St. Paul describes what this means in I Thess 3:17: 'Pray without ceasing, rejoice evermore, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.' Thus, the way I am spending my life determines whether I am in the process of being saved, or in the process of being damned--but the decision is not final until I run out of time to spend. And even if I do spend all my time for salvation, it is still gained only because of the forgiveness and love of God, for I cannot earn it: the price is too high. It must be given by God, who alone loves mankind.

I must also mention here that salvation is never granted individually, for it is for His Bride the Church that Christ is returning, not for individual 'Christians' who were going their own way and serving their own interests. No one person is the Bride of Christ and no one person is saved. We are saved as a corporate being, the Church, not as a finger here and a toe there, but together. However, this touches upon the doctrine of the Church, and I wish to delay speaking of that until the next letter, or this one will be too lengthy.

MARY THE THEOTOKOS

Then you ask, why do we give so much honor to Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ? The reasons are many. First, she is a Saint, and like all the Saints she is worthy of honor, respect, and emulation. But

she is a special Saint, for of all the women in the world, the Father chose her to be Mother of His Son. We believe that God does not choose lightly, bestowing honor for little or no reason. If He chose Mary, then she must have been uniquely holy. This alone is good reason to specially honor her, for we have sure indication of God's approval of her. But there are more reasons. She was the first to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God---the first 'Christian'. She is a symbol of the whole Church, for as she had Christ dwelling in her, so are we to have Him in us. As her pregnancy became obvious, so are we to grow so that the Christ in us becomes obvious to those around us. As she answered God the Father, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me as thou hast said' (Lk 1:38), so we are to answer Him. As she endured scoffing, taunts and abuse because of Christ, so are we to endure. Her command to the servants at the wedding feast at Cana is her advice to all of us: 'Whatever He (Jesus) says to you, do it' (Lk 2:5). Truly, it has been said that those who look upon the Virgin Mary see God instead, for she becomes virtually transparent, showing Him to all. Thus, she is depicted in most icons gesturing toward Christ, making Him the focal point.

Mary is also the protection of the dogma of the Incarnation: that God (not a human being who later became deified) came in the flesh (not an elusive, all-spiritual being) and was our Saviour. This is the reason for her title 'Theotokos', which simply means God-bearer, for she bore Christ God in her womb. She is for us the epitome of all the Saints, of all that we are to be, and most beloved. But it is God we worship, not the Mother of His Son.

And why call her 'Mother of God'? We call her this in order to be explicit, that Jesus Whom she bore was and is God, not a mere man, and not the Messiah-who-later-became-infused-with-God. Repeatedly in the Church's hymns, we affirm that Christ is pre-eternal: that is, that Mary is not the source of His Divinity, for He is from before all eternity, before the creation of time. For Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity, Who took on only His humanity from Mary. By such statements we are safeguarded from the heresy that Mary is the cause of any Person of the Trinity. But since she was Jesus's Mother, then by simple algebraic substitution she was 'God's Mother' as well---that is, Mother to the God-Man, Christ Jesus.

INTERCESSION OF THE SAINTS

Here lurks a false philosophy which colors your thinking about God and the Church. Have you not heard? Christ is risen from the dead! 'Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?' (1 Cor 15: 5) No longer is death the defeat and barrier that it once was, for Christ now has the keys of death and hell. Death cannot totally separate the Body of Christ, for then there would be two bodies, not just one. Instead, we have the help of the Saints in their prayers for us. Consider that the Apocalypse (the Book of Revelation) shows the martyrs praying under the altar that the persecutions might end (Rev. 6:9f). This teaching that Christians who have died pray for those remaining in the world is an ancient one, indeed an Apostolic one. The earliest histories show Christians praying to the new martyrs and rejoicing that a new Saint is in heaven to pray for them.

You ask me how can the Saints hear our prayers. Since the Saints are part of the Body of Christ, and Christ is omnipresent in it, then anything said to Him may also reach them by His Grace. If you look for more details than that, you will find yourself trying to apply rules of physics and geometry to the omnipresent, omnipotent Creator of all and will find that rules which work for finite beings do not work for the infinite Being. That our prayers do reach the Saints is all that we really need to know.

What do we pray for? First, understand that the word 'pray' is only Old English for 'ask'. We ask the Saints, or pray them, to intercede for us before God. We ask them to pray for us just as I might ask my neighbor to pray for me.

Why ask the Saints to pray? Apostle James states 'the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much' (Jas 5:16), and we have the assurance of the Church that these have been accounted by God as righteous. Also, 'we know that if we ask anything according to His will...we have what we ask of Him' (1 Jn 5:14f), and these who live before the throne of God have sure access to knowledge of God's Will. Thus, being free of sin and the cares of this life, and knowing God's Will, they pray with great effect. Further, much of the time there is no Christian nearby whose prayers I can ask, but the Saints are only a thought away. This by no means negates the responsibility of Christians who are yet in the world to pray for one another, for this

we are obligated and privileged to do. Being able to pray to the Saints merely ensures that someone whose prayers will be heard can pray at any time, for our need for God's help is great.

RELICS

The first account of a miracle done by the relics of a Saint is found in II Kings (13:20f); a dead man laid on the bones of Elisha is raised from the dead. How can we deny that miracles can be done by the relics of holy Saints when we have an example of it in Scripture? The earliest accounts of Christian life show Christians reverencing the relics of the martyrs---e.g., in the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, a document written soon after his martyrdom in about 108 AD. Do not be deceived: it is God Who grants the miracle, but He does it through the relics of the Saints. If God so honors them, how can we deny them honor?

Part of the problem with accepting the Church's teaching concerning relics may lie in our having been raised in a society which embraces the philosophy of Plato. Plato taught that the body was a thing inhabited by one's true person, or soul. In his philosophy, the body was not a part of the whole of one's being, but was rather a prison for the soul. However, Scripture teaches that the body is just as much the person (or part of the person) as is soul (or spirit). Were this not the case, why would God promise to raise the bodies of the righteous dead? Why would He not simply make them new bodies from some other material---or dispense with bodies altogether in the resurrection? But since God has promised to raise the saints' bodies from death and corruption, we must teach that there is a true identity between the body and the person. Therefore, we honor the Saints' bodies for they are truly a link with the Saints in Heaven---and because we have been taught to do so from the beginning.

INTERCESSION FOR THE DEAD

We pray for Christians who have died because the Body of Christ is one. We pray because we do not believe that any member of the Body should be deprived of the help of intercessory prayer. Also, since God is not bound by time (for it is a Creation of His), it is possible that our prayers now may have some good effect in the past. This thought is by no means doctrine, but it is a possibility which has been entertained. Also, Christians who have died have not necessarily instantly attained perfection. Rather, the Church believes

that most continue to grow to the fulness of the stature of Christ. For if Christ learned obedience on earth (Heb 5:8), how much more do we need to learn, even though God may have granted us salvation? Thus we pray for the dead in Christ. Our poor prayers may not be of much help to them, but the Body is one and we are obligated to pray for them and all other Christians.

ICONS

We venerate and honor icons (as well as the Cross and Gospel Book), believing that the honor bestowed upon the figure is transmitted to the reality. We honor the reality via the icon. As St. John of Damascus said, 'of old the incorporeal and invisible God was not depicted at all; but now, since God has appeared in flesh and dwelt among men, I make an icon of God insofar as He has become visible. I do not venerate matter, but I venerate the Creator of matter, who for my sake has been pleased to dwell in matter and has through matter effected my salvation. I shall not cease to venerate matter, for it was through matter that my salvation came to pass.' And Leontius of Cyprus (VII century) said, 'So long as two pieces of wood are joined together to form a Cross, I venerate the emblem of the Cross because of Christ Who was crucified on it; but if they are separated from one another, I throw them away and burn them. We do not venerate the nature of the wood, but through wood we embrace and venerate Him Who was crucified....' For we worship the Creator, not the created. We use the created to honor the Creator.

If you will re-read the Old Testament Scriptures' statements about idols, you will discover that those people believed their gods lived inside those idols, or were the idols, and that they therefore had power in and of themselves. But such is not our belief, for the paint and wood and other material of an icon, Cross or Gospel Book have no power in themselves: they are lifeless.

It is a common saying that Christians are to be Christ in the world. Thus, Orthodoxy teaches that each Christian is an icon, an image of God, presented to the world so that all might come to the knowledge of the Truth. And just as icons are imperfect, incomplete representations of God, so are most Christians. Indeed, when Christ came in the flesh, He was an 'image' of God (a most true one)---a flesh and blood, material portrayal of Who God is. So even the people of God are icons, and are worthy of honor.

icons are paint and wood (usually) portrayals of Jesus Christ, the angelic powers, and the Saints. Anyone who worships an icon is not merely a heretic, but a pagan. But those who bow down before and kiss an icon do so because of their need to express their love and thankfulness. Lacking the presence of God or His Saints in the flesh to worship and love, they kiss their pictures in the form of icons. In the same way, a wife whose husband has gone off to war may kiss his picture or cry over it, attempting to express in some way her love and need of him. If this sounds foolish, remember that this is Christianity, where the foolish things of this world are chosen by God to confound the 'wise' (I Cor 1:27).

You also dislike the 'peculiar style' of icons. They are painted in this way in an attempt to depict the inner, true self and nature of the person. This is why they are stylized and somewhat formalized. The unimportant earthly details about cleft chins and moles have been left out. Instead, they strive to show forth God, or the heavenly powers and Saints reflecting God. This is why, for example, Christ in His infancy is depicted as a 'little man', for the Second Person of the Trinity was never an infant in His inner Self. He was the eternal God, the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal Son of God. He was never an infant in His understanding: we were never more intelligent or knowing or wise than He. Thus, He is depicted in His proportions as an adult, but in His size as an infant, for He did become flesh in Mary's womb for our sakes. The stylized method is also a safeguard, that people might always recognize that they are venerating a symbol of the reality, and not the reality itself.

EUCCHARIST

We do not 'sacrifice the Son of God repeatedly' in the Eucharist. Each liturgy is united in time with the Crucifixion and Resurrection. We partake of Him Who was nailed on the Cross and rose again, not a recrucified God. That of which we partake is truly and exactly and literally the most precious Body and Blood of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. You say you don't understand how bread and wine can be changed into flesh and blood. I don't understand either ... but I also don't understand creation. I don't begin to understand the Trinity. I don't even understand electricity. But that does not stop me from turning on a lamp and enjoying the illumination it provides. It is enough for me that the same God Who said 'Let there be light' also said 'This is my Body...this is my Blood...' (Matt 26:26, Mk 14:22ff, Lk 22:19f).

Historically, the most ancient teachings of the Church state that the Eucharist is truly Christ's flesh and blood. In about 110AD, the bishop and martyr St. Ignatius, who was a disciple of the Apostle St. John, taught the Church: 'If they (heretics) believe not in the Blood of Christ, they shall incur condemnation...they confess not the Eucharist to be the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ....' He also stated: 'I have no delight in corruptible food, nor in the pleasures of this life. I desire the Bread of God, the heavenly Bread, the Bread of life which is the Flesh of Jesus Christ.' He did not say It is a 'symbol' of the Flesh of Jesus Christ, but that It is His Flesh. It is not corruptible food as a mere symbol would be, but incorruptible: the Flesh of the God-Man, Christ Jesus. The early Church always seems to have understood that the Blood of Christ 'which cleanses from all sin' (1 Jn 1:7) refers to the Eucharist, not to some mystically applied blood, or only to the actual Crucifixion. It was understood that the cleansing by Christ's Blood took place through partaking of that Blood in the Eucharist.

In the Old Testament, the Passover is seen as a prefiguration of our salvation. After the Hebrews killed the lamb, which is a figure of Christ, they did not paint the lintels of their houses with wine or grape juice. They took the blood of the lamb, and each applied it to the lintels of his house. In the same way, it is only by actually partaking of the true and actual Blood and Body of Christ that we can be made clean. This the Church has always taught, for it is the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Apostles.

PRIESTS

You ask how we can call our priests 'Father' when Matthew 23:9f tells us 'Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father Who is in heaven. And call no man lord (or 'master' in some translations) for you have one Lord (or Master), even Christ'. The question is whether Christ meant this statement literally---i.e., do not use the word 'father' or 'lord' except to refer to God---or whether He was trying to teach something else. The Apostle St. Paul did not understand Christ's words the way you do, for he called slaves' owners 'masters' and 'lords' (Eph 6:5-9). He also called the male parent 'father' (Eph 6:2-4). The Apostle St. John also addressed people as 'father' (1 Jn 2:13f). So it would seem that the Apostles did not understand Christ to be prohibiting the use of the words 'father' and 'lord' when referring to humans. Actually, if you insist on a liter-

al interpretation of that verse, you must call your earthly father by his given name, for if you call him dad, or papa, or male parent, or any other synonym. you are just playing word games, for you are still conveying the thought 'my father' although you are using different sounds to convey that thought. Christ was not teaching that we should disrespect our parents, or change our language around, inventing new words to denote our earthly fathers and superiors. He meant only that there is one true Father, one true Lord, and that we should recognize Him as being exceedingly more worthy of and due our obedience and love.

The ministry of the priesthood exists to administer the sacraments, to teach, discipline, exhort and encourage the people of God. In turn, each priest is under the authority of a bishop whom he must obey. Only the bishops and priests can administer the sacraments. This is what the Apostles taught and this is the Tradition we keep. You can see the wisdom with which the Holy Spirit taught the Apostles and bishops, since this arrangement binds the Body of Christ together, for no Christian can go off entirely by himself and be saved, for he must come to the Body to partake of the sacraments, and there he can be taught and encouraged and disciplined. Thus, the interdependence of the Body's members is protected.

It is true that the saints are all kings and priests now unto God (Rev 1:6). But this truth no more abolishes the priesthood than does is kingships. Rather, it describes how God has exalted the state of His people. It also affirms that each Christian does have direct access to God, which is what Orthodoxy teaches. But this direct access to God does not abolish the ministry of the Apostle, or of the deacon or the teacher. And neither does the fact that all Christians are 'priests' in the general sense abolish the ministry of the priesthood in the Church. The fact that I can pray directly to God does not give me the authority to administer the sacraments: these are two distinct actions. The tradition that only the bishops or presbyters (priests) can administer the sacraments is from the time of the Apostles, and this verse is not even dealing with that tradition.

Our priests are shepherds of the flock who watch over our souls (and so are also called 'pastors'). They do not lord it over us. They are not some aristocracy, ruling over and superior to the average believer. Rather, they are the men God has chosen to burden with the responsibility for the souls of His people. This is a terrible re-

sponsibility and a heartbreaking task. If we show them honor, it is because we see their struggle and toil for us, and we are thankful for them and attempt to show our appreciation to them. We are also to be submissive to them, as St. Paul tells us (Heb 13:17). They in turn obey their bishops and follow the Holy Tradition passed down to them, following the Apostolic teaching in regard to the sacraments and the Christian life.

BAPTISM OF INFANTS

[For portions of this section, the author would like to acknowledge the help of Jordan Bajis of Michigan]

The argument concerning the baptism of infants is one found only in relatively modern times. Not until the Protestant Reformation did the question arise. Now it seems obvious that infants cannot think or decide and thus cannot have faith and therefore should not be baptized. Where is the proof for this modern belief? It is neither a Biblical nor a scientific one. Modern psychology teaches us that children can learn in the womb, and that they recognize their mothers' voices from birth. The Bible states, 'Yet Thou art He who did bring me forth from the womb; Thou didst make me trust when upon my mother's breast' (Ps 22:9), and 'For behold, when the sound of thy greeting reached my ears,' said St. Elizabeth to the Theotokos, 'the babe leaped in my womb for joy' (Lk 1:44). It would seem that both St. David the King and St. John the Baptist had relationships with God from infancy, so who is to say that others cannot? Is not faith a relationship, and not merely a belief in and adherence to a system of doctrines? Since infants can have a relationship, they must also be able to have faith, which is a relationship of trust in God.

Furthermore, infants were circumcised when they were eight days old under the Old Testament Law. St. Paul teaches that this was a prefiguration of Baptism (Col 2:11f). Also, Moses' leading of the people through the Red Sea was a prefiguration of Baptism (1 Cor 10:1-4) and there were infants there, saved by the faith of their parents, although they would have to prove their faith in the wilderness when they were older.

In the New Testament, we read of whole households being baptized (Acts 15:15, 16:33; 1 Cor 1:16). In Greek, the word for household means the entire family, from oldest to infant. The word can no more denote only the adults of a family, than the word 'family' in English can denote only adults.

This would all indicate that infants were baptized from the beginning. In support of this, there seem to be no writings until the time of the Protestant Reformation protesting infant baptism as being an addition to the New Testament teachings. The question seems never to have been considered. If it had been an addition, surely some heretic would have exploited it in the Church's early history. But this never happened. It seems to have been the Apostolic way from the first. The infant is put into a relationship with God just as many children are adopted into earthly families. He may later decide to reject this relationship. But in the meantime, he is an adopted son of God.

How do we justify baptizing infants? Christ said, 'Let the little ones come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God' (Mk 10:14). How can any Christian justify not baptizing his children---denying them the help of all the sacraments and the Church in the early and most formative years?

INCENSE AND CANDLES

Symbols were not discarded by Christ who used the symbolism of the parable as one of his primary teaching methods, for symbols are an integral part of man's life and can be useful to him for salvation. Candles or lamps were used as a symbol of the Church in the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation. Incense is there used as a symbol of our prayers (Rev 5:8). Thus, as the Scriptures use symbols, so does the Church, attempting to remind us of God at all times and by all possible means. Thus, the material in the forms of candles and incense touch our senses in the Church and remind us of who we are, Who God is, and what we are to be doing---that is, being lights in the world and praying without ceasing. Thus again, the Church uses the material God created to help us to turn our minds toward God.

I hope and pray that this letter has been helpful to you, and that it has answered some of your questions. I plan to write another time on part of the doctrine of the Church and to try to answer your questions concerning other denominations, but I think this letter is already long enough and has given you enough to think and pray about for now. I wish I could better convey the richness and depth of Orthodoxy than I have been able to thus far, but I trust that God may minister to you despite my poverty of thought and expression. May He richly bless you in all things.

Your loving daughter,
Marianna

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Another packed issue, being rushed off just in time for the USPS deadline...with a prayer that nothing goes wrong on the printing end! By the Grace of God, it seems that most of the serious bugs have been worked out of the equipment, and so it was that THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE did indeed make it off the press before the Conference, and is now available (see notice elsewhere). Work is in progress on the 'Pictorial Introduction to the Orthodox Faith', translated from the Japanese and with newly-drawn illustrations, and we pray that it will be available before the end of the year. As noted in the 'Letters' section, work is also in progress toward the initiation of a serially-issued collection of short Lives of the Saints, with iconographic drawings of each. These will be issued so that they may be collected in ring-binders in the order they appear in the Church Calendar. All of this work is becoming possible only because of the continued and much appreciated support (in donations and written contributions as well as subscriptions) of so many of our readers—to all, Many Years!

A special word of thanks is due to the contributors to this issue, all of whom have also contributed to previous issues or intend to assist in the preparation of future issues. The cover drawing is the work of Luke Gehring of Minneapolis. Marianna Friesel's series of Letters to parents should be of especial value to those who must make an attempt to convey the Orthodox Faith to those of Protestant background. Many thanks are also due to those at Holy Trinity Monastery whose labors have for so long made possible the printing in LIVING ORTHODOXY of previously unavailable Lives of the Saints. We continue to actively seek contributions to the pages of the magazine from our readers...whether translations or original material...which are of value in the life of the Faith.

Many circumstances have so far frustrated our attempts to regularize and stabilize the publication dates for LIVING ORTHODOXY (at some time other than the USPS-imposed deadlines!), but it is our hope that the next issue will bring that about. Work will begin on it at once, and it should be mailed before the end of September, so as to arrive anywhere in the continental US by mid-October. Thenceforth, each issue (barring mishap) will be mailed in the latter part of the first month by which it is dated. Please notify us of late arrivals or nondelivery.

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ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM on 'The Christian Manner of Life': 'Give not place to the devil.' And so to be at war with each other is to give place to the devil. For where we should stand together and unite against him, our enmity has weakened, and we turn on one another instead. For nothing gives so much place to the devil as enmities. So long as we are united to one another he cannot insert his evil devices to create enmity amongst us; but the moment a rift is made he pours in like a torrent. He needs only a beginning, and this it is that is difficult for him; but this opening made, he makes place for himself on all sides. Now he opens ears only to slanders; and they who speak lies are listened to; for enmity is their advocate, not truth which reasons and judges. And as where there is friendship evils which are true seem untrue, so where there is enmity what is false will now seem true. There is now a different mind, a different judgement; which no longer reasons justly, but only with bitterness and onesidedness. So therefore let us, I beseech you, do all we can before the sun goes down to put an end to enmity and anger. For if you fail to overcome it on the first day, or on the second day, often you will keep it going for a year, and by then the enmity will nourish itself, and need no help to keep going; making us suspect of one meaning words spoken in a wholly different sense; even gestures and manner and anything whatever will serve to fan the flames, changing men into what is worse than being mad, not enduring in their fury either to hear or to speak some name, and speaking only out of hatred and evil.